

## Ornithological Literature

**RAPTORS OF THE WORLD: A FIELD GUIDE.** By James Ferguson-Lees and David Christie. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, USA. 2005: 320 pp., 16 figs., 118 plates, and 7 tables. ISBN: 13-978-0-691-12684-5. \$29.95 (paper).—This new “field guide” to the vultures, hawks, eagles, and falcons of the world represents a distillation of the earlier “identification sections” of the handbook-sized, *Raptors of the World*, by the same authors (Houghton Mifflin, 2001). One hundred and eighteen color plates by Kim Franklin, David Meade, Philip Burton, and Alan Harris illustrate 338 species of raptors, perched and in flight. There are 77 pages of useful introductory materials, including a list of all species and subspecies, together with information on raptor identification, raptor migration, molt, taxonomy, and English names. The first three plates offer keys to the genera of small, medium, and large raptors. The remaining 115 plates are arranged taxonomically and—within taxa—regionally (e.g., island-endemic, Neotropic, Nearctic, and Palearctic buteos, etc.).

In spite of recent and much needed DNA analyses of the “group,” the taxonomy of diurnal birds of prey remains somewhat confused and in considerable dispute. *Raptors of the World: a field guide* adopts an inclusive and species-splitting approach. The recently rejoined New World Vultures begin the work, and 24 forms treated as subspecies in the earlier handbook are considered full species in the field guide. A recently discovered *Micras-tur* also is included.

The heart and soul of any field guide rests in its ability to help readers identify birds in the field. *Raptors of the World: a field guide* does so admirably, particularly for species from parts of the world where regional field guides for raptors have yet to be published (i.e., places other than North America, Europe, the Middle East, South Africa, and Australia). Indeed, when Ferguson-Lees and Christie published their handbook in 2001 I immediately bought two copies: one for my office and one for the field; with the latter be-

ing split and rebound into separate text and plate volumes.

I have since used the plates most extensively in Central and South America, but they also have served me well as a supplement to existing regional guides for Europe and the Middle East. Compared with recent regional guides, the new “world guide” comes up short in several expected ways. First, regional guides are not “cluttered” with look-alike species from other areas, which can make finding the images in *Raptors of the World: a field guide* difficult. Second, regional guides spend considerably more time and space on each species and, typically, offer more information about each of their subjects. Third, regional guides, which are written by regional experts, often capture a species field marks and “jizz” better than Ferguson-Lees and Christie. For these reasons, I recommend using the current work as a back-up to regional guides whenever the latter are available. That said, *Raptors of the World: a field guide* provides the best source of portable information available for Neotropic, Eastern Palearctic, Central African, and island raptors, and in these parts of the world the new guide is an essential tool for anyone serious about identifying raptors in the field.

As is true of any field guide illustrated by more than one artist, one can easily quibble about unevenness in the plates, and certainly some of the images stand out as far better than others. That said, almost all of the illustrations are superior to those available in most general bird guides, particularly for areas outside of North America, Europe, and other well-birded regions. One useful feature of several of the plates is the depiction of specific behavioral patterns useful in field identification. The Crane Hawk (*Geranospiza caerulescens*), for example, is shown thrusting its foot into a nest cavity in search of prey, and a flock of Chimango Caracaras (*Milvago chimango*) is shown following a plow. Many other species are illustrated with typical prey in their talons.

The text that accompanies the plates, while adequate and easy to follow, begs for the in-

clusion of a section on “similar species” for each account. Although the 152-by-228 mm (6-by-9-inch) format makes the work larger than a typical pocket field guide, the book’s production and binding appear to be first rate.

*Raptors of the World: a field guide* is far and away the closest thing to a perfect world guide for birds of prey available, and should be on the shelf and in the backpack of raptor aficionados everywhere. I will be taking my copy into the field for years to come. I highly recommend this innovative and useful guide to anyone interested in identifying and learning more about birds of prey.—KEITH L. BILDSTEIN, Acopian Center for Conservation Learning, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, 4120 Summer Valley Road, Orwigsburg, Pennsylvania; e-mail: Bildstein@hawkmnt.org

THE BIRDS OF SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE WITH ANNOBON ISLANDS OF THE GULF OF GUINEA. BOU Checklist No. 22. By Peter Jones and Alan Tye. British Ornithologists’ Union/British Ornithologists’ Club, Oxford, United Kingdom. 2006: 172 pp., 34 plates, 8 maps. ISBN: 0-907446-27-2. Price £30 (cloth).—This latest volume in a steadily lengthening line of worthy checklists produced by the British Ornithologists’ Union focuses on a chain of small, remote and until recently almost forgotten volcanic islands that straddle the equator off of the coast of Western Africa in the Gulf of Guinea namely Príncipe, São Tomé, and Annobon. Discovering and rediscovering the avian secrets of these islands has been the objective of a number of intermittent and variously successful ornithological expeditions since 1800 and, indeed, only recently have several supposedly ‘lost’ species come to light. The high number of endemic species relative to land mass on these islands has attracted the attention of collectors, taxonomists, and more recently visiting birdwatchers.

The islands of São Tomé and Príncipe, in particular, have become easily accessible with regular connecting international flights and are now firmly on the birding map for tourists and birders eager to add some fascinating and rare endemic species to their world lists. Thus, this book is a useful tool for any prospective vis-

itor. Oddities to be found include the once almost mythical São Tomé Grosbeak (*Neospiza concolor*), a unique forest dwelling Fiscal (*Lanius newtoni*), the strange Dohrn’s Thrush Babbler (*Horizorhinus dohrni*) for which a tag of *incertae sedis* is certainly well applied, the world’s largest Sunbird (*Dreptes thomensis*), the Weaver (*Ploceus grandis*), and the Dwarf Olive Ibis (*Bostrychia bocagei*).

The authors were responsible for an ICBP study report published in 1988 of the islands of São Tomé and Príncipe based on a five weeks visit to the islands. This personal experience has been combined with a thorough review of the scientific literature available. A concise and readable introduction outlines the geography, history, geology, and climate. Trends in breeding, migration, and the origins of the avifauna are discussed, and a brief summary of the other endemic fauna and flora is given. The nomenclature follows *Birds of Africa*, while the taxonomy used tends to follow a middle road, being influenced by Naurois, Collar and Stuart, Sibley and Monroe, and Dowsett and Dowsett-Lemaire. The authors recognise 28 endemics, 6 solely on Príncipe, 15 on São Tomé and 2 on Annobon. Four others occur on both Príncipe and São Tomé with another one shared by all three islands. There is a summary checklist, extensive gazetteer, and bibliography. A selection of pleasing color photographs illustrate the habitats of the three islands.

Most of the book is taken up with species accounts and historical records for the islands are summarised up to 1997. Alternative Portuguese and Spanish names are listed followed by referenced summaries on distribution, abundance, status, migrations, habitat, behaviour, breeding, and threats. The list errs on the side of caution regarding sight records and most of those not substantiated by their presence in collections demand the need “for confirmation” from the authors. Thus, the list provides a solid basis that will surely be the essential reference for future records but also allows much scope for new discoveries particularly concerning migrants and the seabird population where there is obviously still much to be learned. One of the strangest omissions is that regarding the section on vocalisations; it seems exceedingly odd that no reference is given in either the text or bibliography to the